UNITED NATIONS **A**

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/RES/48/140
7 March 1994

Forty-eighth session
Agenda item 114 (b)

RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

[on the report of the Third Committee (A/48/632/Add.2)]

48/140. Human rights and scientific and technological progress

The General Assembly,

Noting that scientific and technological progress is one of the decisive factors in the development of human society,

Bearing in mind the relevant provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1/ the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 2/ the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 2/ and the Declaration on Social Progress and Development, 3/

Reaffirming the importance of its resolution 45/95 of 14 December 1990, by which it adopted guidelines for the regulation of computerized personal data files, and its resolution 46/119 of 17 December 1991, by which it adopted the Principles for the Protection of Persons with Mental Illness and for the Improvement of Mental Health Care,

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1/ Resolution 217 A (III).

2/ See resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

3/ Resolution 2542 (XXIV).

Welcoming with satisfaction Commission on Human Rights resolution 1993/91 entitled "Human rights and bioethics" 4/ and Commission decision 1993/113 entitled "Question of the follow-up to the guidelines for the regulation of computerized personal files", 5/ adopted on 10 March 1993,

Welcoming the relevant paragraphs of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, 6/ adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights, held at Vienna from 14 to 25 June 1993,

Aware that everyone has the right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications,

Reaffirming the need to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms and the dignity of the human person in the conditions of scientific and technological progress,

Noting that certain advances, notably in the biomedical and life sciences as well as in information technology, may have potentially adverse consequences for the integrity, dignity and human rights of the individual, and that illicit dumping of toxic and dangerous substances and waste potentially constitutes a serious threat to the human rights, the life and health of everyone,

Considering that the human being is in the centre of social and economic development,

Conscious that modern science and technology give the possibility to create material conditions for the prosperity of society and for the thorough development of the human person,

Recognizing the need for international cooperation so that all mankind can benefit from the achievements of scientific and technological progress and so that their use in favour of economic and social progress can be to the benefit of all,

Convinced of the need to develop life science ethics both nationally and internationally,

1. Calls upon all Member States to ensure that the achievements of scientific and technological progress and the intellectual potential of mankind are used for promoting and encouraging universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;

4/ See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1993, Supplement No. 3 (E/1993/23), chap. II, sect. A.

5/ Ibid., sect. B.

6/ A/CONF.157/24 (Part I), chap. III.

2. Once again calls upon Member States to take the necessary measures to ensure that the results of science and technology are used only for the benefit of the human being and do not lead to the disturbance of the ecological environment, that is, inter alia, measures against the illicit dumping of toxic and dangerous products and waste;

3. Emphasizes the fact that many advances in scientific knowledge and technology in health, education, housing and other social spheres should be readily available to the populations as the heritage of humanity, with a view to sustainable development, taking into account the need to protect intellectual property rights;

4. Requests the specialized agencies and other United Nations bodies to inform the Secretary-General of the activities and programmes carried out to ensure development of life and technical sciences respectful of human rights, in order to contribute to the reports of the Secretary-General requested in resolution 1993/91 and decision 1993/113 of the Commission on Human Rights;

5. Decides to consider the question of human rights and scientific and technological progress at its fiftieth session under the item entitled "Human rights questions".

85th plenery meeting
20 December 1993